

**FUTURE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
GRANT APPLICATION**

(please fill in the highlighted areas)

I. APPLICANT INFORMATION

A. Applicant Name: Clark Fork Coalition

B. Mailing Address: Box 7593

C. City: Missoula State: MT Zip: 59807

Telephone: 406-542-0539

D. Contact Person: Will McDowell

Address if different from Applicant: same

City: State: Zip:

Telephone: 406-396-7716 (CELL)

E. Landowner and/or Lessee Name
(if other than Applicant): Evan Johnston

Mailing Address: 81 Wild Onion Rd.

City: Deer Lodge State: MT Zip: 59722

Telephone: 560-1133

Landowner #2: Jules Waber 821 W. River Rd., Deer Lodge, MT 59722 846-9719 (w)

Landowner #3: Rick Duncan, 2248 W. River Rd., Deer Lodge, MT 59722 846-2757 x26

II. PROJECT INFORMATION*

A. Project Name: Lower Racetrack Creek Habitat/Passage

River, stream, or lake: Racetrack Creek tributary to Upper Clark Fork river

Location: Township T6N Range 9W Section 9

County: Powell County

B. Purpose of Project:
The purpose of the project is to improve migratory passage and spawning habitat for native and sport fish in the lowest one-mile reach of a high-priority tributary of the Upper Clark Fork.

C. Brief Project Description:

The Lower Racetrack Creek Habitat/Passage project works with three landowners to improve the riparian and aquatic habitat of the stream and allow fish passage upstream during low-water periods. The lowest property on the stream, Waber's, is a small-scale sheep operation. A riparian fence was installed in 1998, but very close to the stream banks, and it is being under-cut by bank erosion, and gradually destroyed by flood debris. The project would remove over 2300 feet of fence on both sides of the creek, clearing the natural floodway of the stream, and install a new fence 2000 feet in length set from 100 to 150 feet back from the stream bank. This would establish a new riparian pasture, which would be rotationally grazed by sheep to reduce weeds, and promote native riparian vegetation (weeds have increased since the enclosure in 1998).

The next landowner upstream is Johnston, which also has an older riparian fence built right on the stream bank, also repeatedly damaged by floods. Horses and cattle are accessing the riparian corridor due to chronic fence damage, overgrazing the site and trampling the stream banks and bed. The project would remove 600 feet of streamside fence, and install 400 feet of fence on the terrace, clearing the floodway of the stream and removing all livestock impact, allowing natural riparian regeneration. In order to water horses and cattle, a drilled well and two winterized stock tanks would be installed. At the upper end of the Johnston property there is a rustic irrigation diversion, made of concrete debris, fence posts and tarp, which is a fish passage barrier at low water (often August through October). This diversion would be replaced with a collapsible pin-and-plank structure with a Denil fish ladder. This will facilitate movement of native and sport fish (spawning brown trout, cutthroat, possibly bull trout) during all times of year into the middle reaches of this drainage.

The upper landowner, Duncan, grazes horses all year along the creek, and cattle seasonally. Livestock water year-long out of the creek, and have contributed to considerable erosion of the stream bank at this site. The project will install a well and winterized water tank for this pasture and a fence to limit all livestock access to this section of the stream.

Racetrack Creek is a large stream, and a Tier 1 priority tributary for fishery restoration in the Upper Clark Fork according to Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks. This lower mile of Racetrack is one of the most productive fluvial brown trout spawning reaches anywhere in the Upper Clark Fork; this project should contribute to expanding spawning opportunities and reducing livestock interference with fish reproduction. Cutthroat trout (<90% pure) are common in the middle and upper watershed, and have potential to re-establish migratory connections to the Clark Fork as the river is cleaned up. Bull trout historically used Racetrack Creek—this stream was listed as a bull trout population in the 1995 Montana Bull Trout working group status report. Biologists have not confirmed bull trout in Racetrack since the 1980s, but anglers continue to report the species as present (no documentation).

Lower Racetrack is a seasonally de-watered stream reach. The Clark Fork Coalition is working on a number of in-stream flow projects in Racetrack Creek, including acquiring storage water to supplement late-season flows, and other water rights. This habitat and passage project is a natural complement to the in-stream flow work.

D. Length of stream or size of lake that will be treated: One mile

E. Project Budget:

Grant Request (Dollars): \$ 46,037

Contribution by Applicant (Dollars): \$ In-kind \$
(salaries of government employees are not considered as matching contributions)

Contribution from other Sources (Dollars): \$ In-kind \$
(attach verification - See page 2 budget template)

Total Project Cost: \$

- F. Attach itemized (line item) budget – see template
- G. Attach specific project plans, detailed sketches, plan views, photographs, maps, evidence of landowner consent, evidence of public support, and/or other information necessary to evaluate the merits of the project. If project involves water leasing or water salvage complete supplemental questionnaire (fwp.mt.gov/habitat/futurefisheries/supplement2.doc).
- H. Attach land management and maintenance plans that will ensure protection of the reclaimed area.

III. PROJECT BENEFITS*

- A. What species of fish will benefit from this project?:

All native and sport fish in Racetrack Creek will benefit (brown trout, brook trout, cutthroat trout, mountain whitefish, longnose sucker, slimy sculpin) from improved passage and habitat. Although bull trout have not been confirmed by biologists since the 1980s in Racetrack Creek, there is a possibility that a unconfirmed remnant population exists (anglers have reported bull trout recently).

- B. How will the project protect or enhance wild fish habitat?:

The project will protect the stream corridor riparian and aquatic habitat by limiting grazing on three neighboring properties, and restoring a more natural floodway for the stream. It will also improve fish passage between the lower mile and the middle reach of the stream during low-water periods by installing a fish ladder.

- C. Will the project improve fish populations and/or fishing? To what extent?:

One goal of the project is to expand access to Racetrack Creek for fall spawning brown trout, which primarily use the lower mile of the creek (below the partial barrier addressed in this project). There have been reports of super-imposition of brown trout redds in lower Racetrack, which may indicate more good spawning areas are in demand, and reproduction could improve with access to higher reaches. The improvement of an irrigation diversion is also expected to help manage in-stream flows in coming years, which will improve connectivity for all fish. A critical constraint on native fish use of lower Racetrack Creek is the poor water quality in the Clark Fork Superfund reach. As this river reach is cleaned up by Superfund, water quality conditions should be more conducive to movement in and out of the river by native fish.

- D. Will the project increase public fishing opportunity for wild fish and, if so, how?:

Fishing opportunities will remain the same.

- E. If the project requires maintenance, what is your time commitment to this project?:

The Clark Fork Coalition, as a water right holder on Racetrack Lake, has a long-term commitment to work with irrigators on Racetrack Creek. We will work with landowners to maintain in-stream irrigation infrastructure and other streamside improvements.

- F. What was the cause of habitat degradation in the area of this project and how will the project correct the cause?:

Habitat has been degraded by elimination of riparian vegetation (facilitated by the overly-narrow corridor of the existing fence on two properties), trampling of stream bed and banks by livestock throughout the upper two properties, and the partial loss of connectivity due to an irrigation fish passage barrier during low-flows. The project directly addresses better riparian management on all three properties, which should reduce livestock access, particularly horses and cattle, to the stream. Off-stream water allows these landowners to continue to use their pastures, without exposing the stream to severe, unrestricted livestock pressure. The fish ladder and new diversion will directly address the fish passage/connectivity concern.

- G. What public benefits will be realized from this project?:

The public will benefit from improved fish and wildlife habitat quality, improved connectivity of the stream to the river, and increased fish populations. The benefits could translate into better fishing opportunities in the Upper Clark Fork river, since Racetrack is such a large tributary.

- H. Will the project interfere with water or property rights of adjacent landowners? (explain):

No.

- I. Will the project result in the development of commercial recreational use on the site?: (explain):

No.

- J. Is this project associated with the reclamation of past mining activity?:

No.

Each approved project sponsor must enter into a written agreement with the Department specifying terms and duration of the project.

IV. AUTHORIZING STATEMENT

I (we) hereby declare that the information and all statements to this application are true, complete, and accurate to the best of my (our) knowledge and that the project or activity complies with rules of the Future Fisheries Improvement Program.

Applicant Signature:

Date:

Sponsor (if applicable):

***Highlighted boxes will automatically expand.**

Mail To: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Habitat Protection Bureau
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Incomplete or late applications will be returned to applicant.

Applications may be rejected if this form is modified.

*****Applications may be submitted at anytime, but must be received by the Future Fisheries Program office in Helena before December 1 and June 1 of each year to be considered for the subsequent funding period.*****